

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Nora Kalahewale Auna Kaaua

Nora Kalahewale Auna Kaaua was born August 15, 1916 in Kukuihaele, Hawai'i. The youngest of fifteen children, she lived in Waipi'o Valley where her family owned a taro farm. She attended school in Waipi'o Valley until the sixth grade. She then moved to Honolulu to live with her sister and continue school at Kalākaua Intermediate. She graduated from McKinley High School in 1934.

When she was about sixteen years old she worked part-time for Honolulu Rapid Transit. She then worked for Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association. In 1943, she worked as one of the first female flight attendants (then called airline hostesses) for Hawaiian Airlines.

During the war, she performed with the USO as a hula dancer and worked as a clerk stenographer at the Army Ordnance Depot. As a member of the Royal Hawaiian Girls' Glee Club she danced in the first Kodak Hula Show.

When the war ended she worked as a secretary for the Honolulu Paper Company for a year followed by the Durante-Irvine Company for ten years, and then for the Tax Foundation of Hawai'i until she retired in 1979.

She married Samuel Parker Kaaua in 1949.

Tape Nos. 22-3-1-92 and 22-4-1-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Nora Kalaheluwale Auna Kaaua (NK)

February 10, 1992

Kāhala, O'ahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Nora Auna Kaaua at her Kāhala home on February 10, 1992. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

Okay, Mrs. Kaaua, to begin, could you tell me a little bit about your parents, where they're from?

NK: Well, my father was an alien, he came from China. And my mother was pure Hawaiian. And her maiden name was Kahaawi. Nora Kalaheluwale Kahaawi was her maiden name. My father's name was Paul Hee Sack. But how the name Auna came from, I don't know.

JR: That's a Hawaiian name, yeah?

NK: It's half and half. Au is a Chinese name, you know what I mean?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

NK: And my father and mother had fifteen children.

JR: Where do you fit in?

NK: I'm the fifteenth child.

JR: You're the youngest. And what date were you born?

NK: August 15, 1916.

JR: And where was that?

NK: Kukuihaele, Hawai'i. But we lived in Waipi'o Valley.

JR: Do you know how your parents came to meet?

NK: Not that I know of. I think he just went down in the valley, and they look—you know,

Chinese, they always look for young chicks.

(Laughter)

NK: My mother was, I think, only about fourteen or fifteen when they got married. He was about twenty.

JR: What was he doing?

NK: Rice planter, and then taro planter. That's all he did. Of course, he was a fisherman also.

JR: Do you know what your mother's family did?

NK: No, not that I can think of or know of. My mother never did work.

JR: But she had fifteen kids!

(Laughter)

JR: That was work enough.

NK: Well, they didn't believe in birth control then, or abortion.

JR: What's the age gap between you and the oldest?

NK: Well, my mother was forty-something when she had me. So at fourteen or fifteen [she had her first child], I guess then you can span the years. Oh, I have nephews older than me.

JR: Oh, yeah?

NK: Mm hmm, they're older than I am. They were children from my oldest sister.

JR: How many of you children are still living now?

NK: Just two of us. I have a sister that's on Maui. Her name is Florence Lumahai Ellis. And she has Alzheimer's disease, so she's at the Kula Hospital. She is eighty-seven years old.

JR: So you were actually born outside the valley?

NK: Yeah, although we lived in the valley. But my mother, I guess, had to go up or was up there when she was ready to (give birth).

JR: How did someone get out of the valley at that time?

NK: Well, they either came up on horses or mules or walked.

JR: So she may have been nine months pregnant . . .

NK: Maybe not, maybe before that, I guess. I don't know. But I know she had a very hard time with me because I came out feet first.

JR: Do you know if she had any of the children in the valley?

NK: Oh yes, oh yes. I think I'm the only one that's born up there. I think most of them were born in Waipi'o Valley.

JR: Was there any kind of doctors or midwives or anything like that?

NK: No, just a friend or maybe my father, and they would say, "Push, push!" And then you'd hear, "Wah!"

(Laughter)

NK: They were all born at home, not in a hospital.

JR: Is that how everybody down there had . . .

NK: More or less, unless you could afford to get up and go to the hospital.

JR: So what was it like back then?

NK: Well, what do mean, "What was it like?"

JR: Well, the living there in Waipi'o Valley.

NK: Well, we had the outside latrine, you know, and no bathroom. You had to bathe in the stream.

JR: You had a family of seventeen then, yeah?

NK: With my father and mother, yeah.

JR: So what kind of a house would seventeen people live in?

NK: Three bedrooms. (Chuckles) We had a wooden stove. And, of course, no icebox down there, so they had safes. You know the old-fashioned safes where they used to keep food so the flies don't get at 'em? They didn't have icebox at all. And no bathroom, no bathing facilities, so you had to bathe in the stream or on the veranda—had a big veranda, and you'd have those pans, you know, galvanized pans?

JR: Oh, big tin buckets . . .

NK: Big round ones. And get water and splash! That's how ancient it was.

JR: What was the closest town then?

NK: Kukuihaele.

JR: Did you folks go there very often?

NK: Just my father went up to get the staples that we needed, like cracker—not bread, 'cause we couldn't afford bread—and condensed milk, cream, stuff like that, sugar.

JR: Was there a store in the valley?

NK: Yes, there was.

JR: There was. But you couldn't get some of those items there?

NK: Well, you could, but I think up where my father shopped, you could all charge and pay at the end of the month. So I think that's why he did it. I don't know about him going down [to a store in the valley], unless it was a dire necessity or he had money. But up, it was a plantation store so they allowed you to charge. My uncle worked for the plantation, and that's my mother's brother.

JR: What did he do?

NK: He was a *luna*, I guess they called him in those days. *Luna*—plantation *luna*. That's what he did. His name was Fred Olepau. O-L-E-P-A-U. That's the only one I know of my mother's family. I don't know of any other, being the youngest, you know.

JR: So your dad was growing rice?

NK: Mm hmm [yes], and then taro.

JR: Then taro. Do you know why . . .

NK: I don't know, I really don't know why. Maybe because. . . I can't say why. There must have been a reason. Maybe taro was easier. I can't say.

JR: Was he still growing rice when you were born?

NK: Yes. But we also worked in the rice paddies, and taro later on.

JR: Was that hard work?

NK: Darn tooting!

(Laughter)

NK: Real hard work.

JR: Did all the children have to help out?

- NK: Yes, mm hmm. I had brothers and sisters that—of course, I wasn't born when they were helping.
- JR: Did the brothers and sisters stay in the valley once they got older or did they move out?
- NK: No, they moved out. I had only about three brothers that stayed in the valley, three or four. Most of them moved on. I had one brother who stayed in Honoka'a, two down here [in Honolulu], and my two sisters down here, of the ones that lived. Some died in the meantime.
- JR: What exactly did you have to do in terms of helping with the farming?
- NK: Not much, except to get papayas for the pigs, to feed the pigs, and cut grass for the horses.
- JR: I remember talking to you earlier, you mentioned the rice bird.
- NK: Oh yeah. To scare the rice birds away they had this soda cracker cans or Saloon Pilot cans and rocks in 'em, and you'd have to ring—every time you'd see the rice bird, you'd have to pull the cord and scare the birds away.
- JR: (Chuckles) Was there time to have fun and play?
- NK: Of course, sure. But we couldn't go anywhere because to get anywhere, it's so far. So you knew how to play jacks. Didn't know how to play cards at all.
- JR: Were there many children around your age living in the valley back then?
- NK: Oh yes, when we were going to school down in the valley.
- JR: So there was a school in the valley?
- NK: Yes, mm hmm.
- JR: What kind of school was that?
- NK: It was first grade to sixth grade. One principal and he taught each class. He was the only teacher. Maybe later on they had some more, but. . . . And then in the meantime the school was gone, so they had to go up to Kukuihaele.
- JR: How far was the school from where you were living?
- NK: Oh, I had to cross about five streams to get to it. Maybe more, I think. I can't remember. About five streams to get to it. And if the river got flooded, you just couldn't go to school, that's all.
- JR: Were you wearing shoes?
- NK: No, no, couldn't afford shoes.

JR: Do you remember what you would wear to school of a day?

NK: Remember bloomers in those days?

JR: I've seen pictures.

(Laughter)

NK: Those blue bloomers, you know? And my mother, oh God, she'd starch our petticoats so stiff in those days. Starch was the in thing. I guess that's the only way the clothes lasted. You'd have to wash clothes on the rock, like they do down the river, like they do in India, wherever.

JR: That's how you washed clothes?

NK: That's how you wash clothes. You didn't have a washboard, you wash it on the rocks.

JR: Was there detergent?

NK: No, just soap.

JR: Just soap.

NK: No detergent then. And charcoal iron.

JR: What is that? Charcoal iron?

NK: You put charcoal in it to heat the iron, like you make barbecue. We had a wood stove.

JR: To cook with?

NK: Mm hmm. So we didn't have electric iron, we had a charcoal iron.

JR: And you'd hang the clothes up on a line or something?

NK: Yes, we had clotheslines. But we didn't have ironing board. We'd have to make a pad, iron on the floor.

JR: You mentioned the floor, what was the floors in the house?

NK: They were, what you call those things? Tongue and groove?

JR: Oh, so it was wooden.

NK: Yeah, wooden floors. Didn't have bunk beds, but in one bedroom had two beds, one had three beds, and the other one had two beds. And by the time the older ones moved out, then the next ones could stay.

(Laughter)

JR: The girls wore the bloomers to school. Do you remember what the boys had to wear?

NK: I can't remember.

JR: Could they wear shorts and stuff, do you think?

NK: Yeah, they did. But not the fancy kind, you know. Cutoff.

(Laughter)

JR: Not *Jams* . . .

(Laughter)

NK: Not *Jams*, the cutoff kind.

JR: How long would it take---you said you had a number of streams. How long would it take to get to school?

NK: Gee, I'd say maybe a half hour or forty-five minutes, maybe longer. I can't remember.

JR: Did you pack lunch?

NK: Yes, my father made lunch. And in those days they had those tin cans that you have two layers, you know, like the plantation used. The bottom would be all the rice and on top would be the goodies.

JR: What do you mean, "goodies"?

NK: Well, I don't know what my father cooked. I forgot now what he put in there. Wasn't very much.

JR: Like fish?

NK: Fish.

JR: Did it seem like you always had enough to eat though?

NK: Oh sure, we were never hungry.

JR: Never.

NK: Mm mm [no]. Because he always went fishing, and then, of course, we had cows and pigs and sheep, goat.

JR: How much property?

NK: Two point two [2.2] acres.

JR: Two point two acres.

NK: And the house we stayed in was not ours. It was my uncle, the one that I spoke about.

JR: The *luna*?

NK: Yeah. That was his house, and we stayed there because. . . . All our lives.

JR: So how long did you stay in . . .

NK: Waipi'o?

JR: Yeah.

NK: Well, I stayed until I graduated sixth grade and came to Honolulu to go to intermediate school. So I went to Kalākaua Intermediate and then went to McKinley [High School].

JR: Was that the usual pattern, since the school only went to sixth grade?

NK: Seventh, eighth, and ninth was intermediate.

JR: So did most people come to Honolulu? Or was that an unusual thing?

NK: Well, those that could afford, I guess, came. But others went up. Honoka'a, I think, had a high school and had an intermediate school. If they wanted to go to the university—and at that time was territorial—then they'd have to come to Honolulu.

JR: Can you remember whether you wanted to come to Honolulu or not?

NK: Oh sure, because there was nothing there [in Waipi'o Valley]. And my sisters wanted me to be a schoolteacher. But that was not my bag when I was almost graduating. I felt sorry for the kids that I was going to teach. So I changed during my senior year.

JR: Senior year of . . .

NK: Yeah. Halfway through I changed and took business courses, and then I went back for post-graduate work. I learned typing and shorthand, then I went to business college.

JR: Oh, I see. Had you ever been to Honolulu before you came in seventh grade?

NK: Oh yes. We traveled on those—steerage, of course. I think it was five dollars then or whatever, or the kids didn't pay, I forgot. I came with my mother once, I think, or twice. I can't remember.

JR: Do you remember if they ever talked about moving out of the valley, moving to town?

NK: Mm mm [no]. That was their life.

JR: But they didn't necessarily expect their children to follow suit.

NK: No, no. My father died when he was sixty-nine or something, I forgot. Then my mother died here. She came over here because she was getting old, so we put her in Lunalilo Home. And then she died. She just died from old age. Of course, she was diabetic too.

JR: Do you remember how old she was?

NK: Eighty-seven.

JR: And what happened to the farm in the valley?

NK: Oh, my brother took over and planted taro and sold the taro, and we got 60 percent. We got 60 percent, he got 40 percent. Or he got 60, we got 40. I forgot. Then he got to be elderly and so he gave up. And he went to Maui and stayed with my niece or stayed by himself. And my sister was on Maui too. And then we just let it go. Now we got someone just doing what they want to do with it, and they're not paying us anything at all.

JR: So you still own the land?

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: Do you ever go back?

NK: I went back several times, but now I don't think I'd like to go back.

JR: Why not?

NK: I don't like going [i.e., driving] down the *pali*. If I'm going, I'm going to walk. Coming up, I don't mind [driving] because I can't see.

JR: It must look different today.

NK: I'm sure. I'm sure. There's lot of *Haoles* down there now.

JR: Yeah, yeah. I guess they're farming. I don't know.

NK: I don't think they're farming. I don't know what they're doing.

(Laughter)

JR: Living the good life.

(Laughter)

NK: They must have money to stay down there. There's no store there now, I don't think. They'd

have to go up. Bishop Museum has a lot of land there too.

JR: So you came to Honolulu to go to seventh grade. Where were you staying?

NK: With my sister, the one that's on Maui. 'Cause she was working, and so I stayed with her. I stayed with her until I got married. I worked for Honolulu Rapid Transit when I was about sixteen or seventeen, part-time, 'cause my sister worked there. And then I worked for Hawaiian Sugar Planters' [Association]. And then I worked for a realtor. I forgot his name. And then I got married.

JR: What year was that?

NK: Thirty-seven, I think. Nineteen thirty-seven. (NK counts years.) Yeah. I was divorced about four-and-a-half years later. And I legally adopted my niece's child. It was during the war. No, not during the war, before the war. He was born about 1938 or '39.

JR: Your niece, I guess, was about your age at the time?

NK: No, she was younger than I am. I had one niece. Her sister was about my age, but she was younger.

JR: And she had a child . . .

NK: Mm hmm. And so I was married and I said I wanted to. . . . I couldn't have any children, so I said if I could adopt—because she couldn't take care of it. So I adopted him. Then I got divorced in ['42]. Then I went to work for Hawaiian Airlines as one of the first airline hostesses, they called them then. Then they called them stewardess, now they call them flight attendants.

JR: But then it was airline hostess?

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. Either it was stewardess first and then airline hostess. . . . I think it's stewardess. No, I can't remember. But it was either one. Because the boys had to go to war. They only had stewards then on Hawaiian. They didn't have any girls. So I stayed there for a year. They knew I could do secretarial work, so I went down and worked in the freight office for—at that time it was Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company, and they had Hawaiian Airlines. And then we did USO [United Service Organizations] work during the war.

JR: You were dancing?

NK: Yes, mm hmm. Then in '44 I worked for the Army Ordnance Depot in the old Schuman Carriage [Company] building on Richard Street and Beretania. That's where they were located, right opposite the Army-Navy YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association], which is Hemmeter [Corporation Building] now. And then we moved up to Fort Shafter, and then the war was over. And I wasn't about to take an examination to. . . . Oh, I became a clerk stenographer.

JR: That's with ordnance?

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. That's what they called them then, clerk stenographers. Then I didn't think I could pass the civil service test, so I applied for a job at Honolulu Paper [Company] and worked there for about a year. I think from '46 to '47. And then in '48 I went to work for Durante-Irvine Company, a plumbing outfit. I stayed there till 1958. And then I went to Tax Foundation of Hawai'i and retired from there in 1979.

JR: And you were doing . . .

NK: Secretarial work.

JR: When did you first start dancing?

NK: Oh, when I was about fifteen, fourteen years old.

JR: So you had come to---that's when you were living with your sister.

NK: Yes.

JR: Do you remember how that came about?

NK: Well, they sent me to go take hula lessons.

JR: The family?

NK: Uh huh [yes]. And so I took hula lessons. And then somehow or other, I don't know how, I got to join the Royal Hawaiian Girls' [Glee Club]. Oh, because at Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company, the leader of the group, which was Louise Akeo, was the secretary there in---oh, what department now? So that's how I became a member of the Royal Hawaiian Girls, through that connection. Then we did the first Kodak Hula Show. And then USO was after that, of course.

JR: Can you remember seeing hula being done when you were living on the Big Island?

NK: No. No. In those days, only men danced. (Chuckles) No, I don't remember at all.

JR: When you did see it, was it something that you decided you wanted to do or did your family talk you into doing it?

NK: No, I wanted to.

JR: These lessons that you started taking, was that after school or something like that?

NK: Uh huh [yes].

JR: So you'd go to McKinley and then maybe. . . . Do you remember where you took the lessons or who the teacher was?

NK: Gee, I can't remember. My sister would remember, but I can't remember. We learned the

old-fashioned dancing, you know. The hula *'ōlapa*, that's the old-fashioned dancing. And then you later learn the modern dancing.

JR: Did the group put on performances, that kind of thing?

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. Well, we worked the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and the Moana Hotel at that time, 'cause it was owned by Matson [Navigation Company].

JR: That's the glee club?

NK: Yeah, Royal Hawaiian Girls' Glee Club.

JR: But I meant the earlier . . .

NK: Oh, when I was . . .

JR: Taking lessons.

NK: Taking lessons? No, that's all. I graduated and then I joined the Royal Hawaiian Girls.

JR: You must have been a quick study.

NK: Well, I had a mind that—you know, when you go to the hula shows, there's always one girl that's calling the next verse, the next line. I did that.

JR: Did you know Hawaiian?

NK: Oh yes.

JR: Was it spoken at home?

NK: Yes.

JR: Your mother?

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: Did your mother and father speak Pidgin English to one another?

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: And your mother spoke . . .

NK: My father spoke Hawaiian.

JR: Oh, he did?

NK: Yes. He spoke Hawaiian fluently.

JR: So he spoke Hawaiian, Chinese, and English?

NK: Not too much English.

JR: Not too much English?

NK: No.

JR: So the family, then, did most of their talking in Hawaiian?

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: Do you still you remember? (Laughs)

NK: Well, I think I was too young then. Because when I came over here I was about thirteen or twelve, I think. I can just barely remember. Oh, he'd cuss her in Chinese, though.

(Laughter)

NK: When he gets mad.

JR: But did she know what he was saying?

NK: I don't think so.

(Laughter)

JR: Just as well. (Laughs) So how old were you then when you joined the girl's glee club? Was that eighteen or so?

NK: Around there, I think.

JR: So it was right after high school?

NK: Right after high school. So maybe seventeen, I think, or eighteen. Yeah, about seventeen or eighteen. And then I got married when I was twenty-one years of age.

JR: You mentioned that after high school, I think, you said you went to business school or something for a year.

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: So the activities with the glee club must have then been what, in the evenings?

NK: In the evenings, or most of them were in the evenings.

JR: Weekends?

- NK: Mm hmm [yes]. During the week, if someone was having a party, then we'd go. Some bigwigs, you know, like Dillinghams and the Athertons and all the well-known families then that could hire a glee club to entertain their guests.
- JR: How many women were in the organization?
- NK: Well, it changed on and off. Some would go, some would stay. So there was quite a big group.
- JR: And you mentioned the name of the woman who—Louise . . .
- NK: Akeo. She was the leader of the group.
- JR: She was the leader.
- NK: And she worked during the day as a secretary.
- JR: Did she also choreograph?
- NK: Oh yeah. She said what songs and what dances we were going to do. Oh yes, quite a big group, and they changed. I think there were six of us at the Kodak Hula Show. Six hula dancers, I think. And the group that sang was not as big as the one that usually belongs to the club. They'd take certain ones that can go or could go, you know, because they played instruments and sang.
- JR: What was it like at the hotels? There was what, the Royal Hawaiian and . . .
- NK: And the Moana.
- JR: . . . and the Moana at that time.
- NK: And we did late shows with Harry Owens' orchestra and Malcolm Beelby. Malcolm Beelby was after Harry Owens. And at the night shows we used cellophane skirts instead of ti leaf skirts. We used cellophane skirts.
- JR: What was the. . . Was there an advantage to one or the other?
- NK: Oh, in those days it was sort of a fad, you know. And then, of course, you didn't have to go buy ti leaves. I mean, it lasted, cellophane skirts.
- JR: Otherwise, you had to . . .
- NK: Buy the ti leaves and make your own skirt.
- JR: So you made your own?
- NK: Yes. We all did. Everyone did.

JR: How often did you have to do that?

NK: Well, I think the most a hula skirt would last would be about a week at the most. It all depends how you keep it.

JR: What else were you wearing then? You had the hula skirt . . .

NK: *Holokū*. Not muumuu [*mu'umu'u*]. They were called *holokū*, with the tail. Now they have muumuus, holomuus—*holomu'us* they call them. *Holomu'us* are the fitted kind. But in those days it was *holokū*. That's the one with the tail—no, not tail, train.

JR: Would you folks change in the middle of a show?

NK: Oh yes, sure.

JR: What was a typical. . . . If I were a tourist going to see you at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in the thirties, what would I be in for?

NK: Well, they'd sing mostly Hawaiian songs, and then they sang the *hapa-Haole* songs so the tourists would understand. And yet, sometimes they would interpret the dance or the song for the tourists. In those days, the tourists that came were quite wealthy. I would say that they just liked the soft music, not this loud music. You know, sweet and soft.

JR: So they'd come in for the show, sit down, and then . . .

NK: Dinner or whatever. We'd put on an hour show or whatever. The hotel hired us to entertain their guests.

JR: Harry Owens, he had an orchestra?

NK: Yes, dance music.

JR: And then you would come out at a certain . . .

NK: Yeah, about maybe 9:30 or 10:30 [P.M.], during the intermission, and put on a show.

JR: Do you remember whether they liked the ancient style or the modern or . . .

NK: Well, I think they liked the modern better. At a nightclub, you don't do the ancient ones, you just do the modern ones. And at that time, Harry Owens had those *hapa-Haole* songs and [Robert Alexander] "Andy" Anderson had the *hapa-Haole* song, "Lovely Hula Hands" and "My Little Brown Gal" and all of that old, old songs.

JR: When would you do the other style?

NK: Not very often. At the Kodak Hula Show, yeah. Not too much but, it was mostly the modern. At the Kodak Hula Show, I think they did. . . . I can't remember. I can't remember if they did the old-fashioned one.

JR: So you were getting paid to do the dancing in the evenings then, plus when you started working during the day. Were you making a pretty good living?

NK: Oh, you made more money dancing than working, (laughs) sure you did!

JR: Were there any women who just danced and didn't work during the day?

NK: Oh yeah, well, the younger ones. The younger ones. . . . No, most of the musicians didn't work. Musicians or the hula dancers. I know Tootsie [Notley] didn't work. Delphine [Ornellas] didn't work. Lilly Padeken worked. Caroline Hubble worked. Quite a few worked. Not too many didn't work.

JR: So tell me about the Kodak Hula Show, what you can remember about the origins.

NK: Well, I guess the manager—not manager, president. What do they call them? He [Fritz Herman] was head of the Kodak Company here, Eastman Kodak, and so he thought of the idea. Then they could sell films, you know. So he put on a show, I think it was every Tuesday, once a week. Now they do it twice a week, I think. [Currently the show is staged three times a week.]

JR: In the daytime.

NK: Yes. In the front of the natatorium, Waikīkī [War Memorial] Natatorium. The aquarium was on this side and the natatorium was on that side, and we were in front of the natatorium, opposite that park.

JR: Kapi'olani.

NK: Yeah, Kapi'olani Park.

JR: There's a parking lot there now.

NK: Yes, yes.

JR: There was grass there before?

NK: Well, this is on the ocean side that we danced, not at the park. We danced on the ocean side.

JR: And was there some sort of grandstand or something for the tourists to sit in?

NK: Not that I can remember. I guess they did, but not as much as they have now, 'cause there weren't too many that came in those days. Like now, they've got a big . . .

JR: Yeah, they're right next to the [Waikīkī] Shell.

NK: Yes, right. No, in those days it was few, not too many. I don't think they were up that way. I think they were all down. I'm not sure.

JR: Do you remember what you got paid for any of the work you did as a dancer?

NK: Well, usually five dollars an hour. It all depends. Sometimes you probably make it cheaper or more, I don't know. But the leader usually sets the price. But if you went out on your own you could charge whatever you wanted.

JR: "On your own," meaning?

NK: Go solo. You know, some orchestra wants you to dance the hula 'cause they only play music. So they need a hula dancer, then you can go on your own.

JR: Did you ever do that?

NK: Yes. Lots of times.

JR: So you were sort of the featured dancer then?

NK: Well, yeah. If they wanted me. They wanted the other gals too. But this Elmer Lee had an orchestra, Renny Brooks. So they'd call me and I'd go.

JR: They played dances around town?

NK: No, just private homes and private parties. No, not in any restaurant or anything like that. It was always in private homes or in a hotel. In fact, we did one for Dan Topping I think. (Pause) So each one, if somebody wanted them, they'd go. They didn't have to. . . . I mean, just stay as a group to dance.

JR: To have an orchestra and a dancer in your home you must have had some money, I would imagine. Mostly *Haole* homes, that kind of thing?

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: When you were dancing, did you ever get to. . . . For instance, at the Royal Hawaiian, you mentioned that the tourists were wealthy. Was it acceptable for you to socialize with them?

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. If they took a liking to you, they'd slip you something. If they take a liking. And then, some of them want to take you out, and we were young then.

(Laughter)

NK: I went out with quite a few.

JR: Oh, you did?

NK: Yeah!

JR: I'm just going to stop for a second, turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JR: I think maybe when we were talking the last time, you mentioned doing work as a greeter.

NK: Oh yes. That was the first Pan American [Airways] planes—clippers, they called them clippers in those days. They landed on the ocean and not on land. Hawai'i Visitors Bureau contacted one or two girls, or whoever they could get, to go and meet this plane and serve them Dole pineapple juice and leis. It all depends. If somebody real notable, then we'd have leis for them.

JR: Did you dance at these things?

NK: Not necessarily. Sometimes. 'Cause there were no musicians. We just greeted them with Dole pineapple juice.

JR: But you put on an outfit . . .

NK: Your hula skirt and everything. Yeah, leis and everything.

JR: And you give a little hug . . .

NK: Yes, yes, yes. Met quite a few people. One was Henry Luce and his wife, Clare Boothe Luce. Remember, she---wasn't he with *Time*? No, not *Time*, *Life* magazine? I think I've forgotten now. [Henry Luce published both *Time* and *Life* magazines.]

JR: It's a different era, (chuckles) you have to excuse me.

NK: That's okay. That's what I mean, you see how ancient it is. (Laughs) Yeah, we met quite a few people, and they were nice, very nice.

JR: And you also got the cruise ships as they came in?

NK: Yes. Like the the German boat—what's its name? I forgot. The Canadian ships. And so we'd go with our hula skirts, get on board and put leis on them. And then, sometimes we would entertain. It all depends. But for those foreign boats we did, but for the Mainland, not too much.

JR: Like the *Lurline*?

NK: Yeah. And what other boats? So many I can't remember.

JR: And these were also pretty well-to-do people?

NK: Well, I think the German boat, I don't know whether it was a tourist or not. I've forgotten. I guess it was a tourist boat, I'm not sure. But yes, they had money.

JR: How would you get out there? Would you go in a group or would you each go individually?

NK: No, we all go in a group, and then we'd go up the gangplank. They were parked at the pier.

JR: So you'd go down there in your attire, your hula skirt?

NK: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, we would have something wrapped around us.

JR: An overcoat or something like that?

NK: Yeah, mm hmm. So they wouldn't. . . . Sometimes we didn't though. We went just like that.

(Laughter)

JR: Did you get any. . . .

NK: Whistles?

(Laughter)

JR: Yeah.

NK: Well, I think sometimes it's too early in the morning or people are at work by the time we. . . . But in those days they had coin divers.

JR: Coin divers? What is that?

NK: Never heard of coin divers? They'd swim around the boat and people would throw coins down, and they'd dive for the coins.

JR: These are local boys?

NK: Yeah.

JR: And they'd catch them in the water?

NK: Uh huh [yes]. They'd dive for 'em. Some threw lots of money, some just threw little money. But it had to be silver, you know, not paper. I think that's why they called them coin divers. Gee, that's so long ago.

JR: Does it seem like a long time?

NK: That's for sure.

JR: Well, you've seen lots of change, haven't you?

NK: Oh yes, uh huh.

JR: Do you ever go to hula dances now or anything like that?

NK: Well, when the Kodak show had their fiftieth anniversary, I did go. It was at that—by the [Waikīkī] Shell, where they have it now. Yes, I did go to the fiftieth reunion. They called all the old (girls) that danced, the first hula dancers that first started with the Kodak.

JR: Do you remember their names?

NK: Yes. Tootsie Notley, Caroline Hubble, Elizabeth Padeken, Delphine Ornellas, myself, and Ululani Barrett—Barrett, I think, was her name. I'm not sure. But there were different ones that came on and left, so I can't remember who. . . . I'll have to look in the album to remember. But when you come back with this [i.e., the transcript of the interview], I might be able to get the names out of the album.

JR: When you see hula today, is it significantly different than what you were doing? (NK nods.) How so?

NK: They're too modern.

JR: Too modern?

NK: Yeah. Some do nicely, but most of them they just. . . . I guess because we're old-fashioned. But the modern, I don't even like their costumes. They really aren't in hula skirts, more or less. Not anymore, except the Kodak Hula Show, I'm sure.

JR: Do you ever tune in to the Merrie Monarch [Festival] when it's on?

NK: Oh yes. But that's. . . . The old-fashioned dancing and the costumes—they do it up for the TV, their costumes, I guess. But I don't remember seeing those things (chuckles) in those days, dancing with those things. Some are quite authentic, but not most. They're too modern.

JR: You mean the actual attire or the movement?

NK: And the movements. They're not as graceful, I think. They move too much. You see, to be a dancer, you have to keep (your shoulders) still. You just move your hands and here [i.e., arms]. But most of them, they just going all over the place. You know what I mean?

JR: They're moving their whole body?

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. If they want to move, that's okay. Move this way, not . . .

JR: Not twisting.

NK: Yeah. You can move, you can move, you can move.

JR: You're just moving your arms.

NK: Yes, yes. But they. . . .

JR: They twist.

NK: Yeah, they go all over the place, as you notice.

(Laughter)

NK: Like I said, we (are) just old-fashioned.

JR: Was it a workout though, when you were dancing?

NK: Oh sure, we rehearsed.

JR: But I mean, physically.

NK: Oh no.

JR: 'Cause sometimes you watch hula today and it looks like they're really . . .

NK: You know why, 'cause they're jumping all over the place. They get tired. We just move along, smoothly. We're not jumping all over the place. If we do, we do it gracefully.

JR: You mentioned that you would have, occasionally, a ti leaf skirt. What would you be wearing on the upper half?

NK: We'd have a top that's green.

JR: Cloth?

NK: Cloth. And we'd have green underwear.

JR: Under the skirt?

NK: Yeah, under the skirt. Green, so that—you know, you couldn't wear white. Everybody'd see you swishing around.

(Laughter)

JR: Everybody would see . . .

(Laughter)

NK: Yeah. And in those days, we had brassieres made out of—oh, I forgot. That was so long ago. In moving, I don't know where I left all of those things.

JR: What do you mean? They were made out of . . .

NK: Some were made out of silk. Silk in those days.

JR: What about—now, sometimes they wear . . .

NK: Wristlets.

JR: Wristlets.

NK: Uh huh [yes]. We did.

JR: And sometimes a headband or something . . .

NK: No, we never wore those *haku* leis. No, we just wore leis. Now, let's see—I can't remember. We wore wristlets and anklets. I can't remember wearing those *haku* leis.

JR: Was there . . .

NK: I think during a hula show we did wear—marigold.

JR: The Kodak? What kind of flowers did you wear generally?

NK: Marigolds, or plumeria.

JR: You didn't have to make those, too, did you? You had to make the skirt, you mentioned, but the leis?

NK: I can't remember. I can't remember really. I think we did our own, but I'm not sure.

JR: But you all would be coordinated.

NK: Yes. Oh yeah. There's no way that you—and in those days you had long hair.

JR: How long was your hair?

NK: Oh, it was about here.

JR: Down to . . .

NK: Waist.

JR: . . . the bottom of your . . .

NK: And yet, I had my hair shortened later, too. Gee, I can't remember. I got to look in the album.

JR: (Laughs) A little visual help.

NK: (Laughs) Yeah.

JR: Okay. I want to get us up to the war years. I was wondering if you recall what you were doing on the sixth of December, the day before Pearl Harbor.

NK: Well, I was at home. I was married then.

JR: So you were married at that time. That was your first husband.

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. Then all hell broke loose December the seventh.

JR: Tell me about that morning.

NK: I can't describe it too well, because we were staying on Nu'uaniu, in that area.

JR: In a rented home or something?

NK: Well, I stayed with his parents when we got married. So that's all I can remember.

JR: Do you remember when you became aware that something was up?

NK: Oh, when the radio—you know, when it came over the radio. And in those days, no TV, you just listened to the radio.

JR: Could you hear any explosions or see smoke?

NK: Yeah, not too much from where we were, not too much.

JR: Can you remember whether you were worried?

NK: I guess we were too young to even worry whether the war was on or whatever. But soon it became evident that—'cause everything was blackout. You couldn't go anywhere.

JR: Where were you working at that time?

NK: In '41? I guess I worked with [Hawaiian] Sugar Planters' [Association], I'm not sure. (Pause) I think I was with sugar planters, not for long, then I worked for a realtor. And then I didn't start working again until I worked for Department of Ordnance during the war, which was about 1943 or '44. Forty-four.

JR: What about the airline?

NK: Oh, I started that in '43.

JR: Before the ordnance?

NK: Yeah. Mm hmm.

JR: So there's a couple years where you weren't working.

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: Towards the outbreak of the war, that time. Did that have anything to do with the war?

NK: Well, then I got divorced in '41, you know.

JR: Oh, oh, oh. Was that . . .

NK: No, '42! I got divorced in '42, I'm sorry.

JR: Was that common back then, getting divorced?

NK: Well, not necessarily so, 'cause when you got married then you usually stayed married. But I guess with my marriage, I was too independent. 'Cause I was dancing and I was making money and he wasn't. He was a bus driver, and he was sort of—I don't know. I moved out to my sister's, and that's when the bitter end came. Then I didn't get married again till 1949.

JR: So you stayed with your sister. Where was she living at that time?

NK: Kaimukī.

JR: Kaimukī. And eventually you got the job with Hawaiian [Airlines].

NK: No, '43 was Hawaiian. Right, right I was flying. I was flying for Hawaiian then, yeah.

JR: I'm just trying to get the dates.

NK: Yeah, I was living with my sister then.

JR: So what was the. . . . I read about what was happening during the wartime. I read about these ration coupons . . .

NK: Yes, they rationed the gas, they rationed the liquor.

JR: . . . and blackout and all that. I mean, what was it like to be trying to get things going?

NK: Well, when we dancing we didn't have to worry about liquor because we got it from the army or navy. But gas, I don't think we had a car then. Food---they didn't ration food, did they?

JR: No, I don't—I think there were just some shortages. People had to wait in line, something like that.

NK: Right, right. No, no hardship whatsoever.

JR: And I guess you were dancing still throughout that. When did you hook up with the USO?

NK: Oh, '42. Soon after the war [started] and then I went to Hawaiian Airlines.

JR: I want to find out a little bit more about the USO business, and then we'll get to Hawaiian Air later. But was it the same people you were dancing with before or a different group?

NK: No, different group. Tootsie was the only one that was in the USO group. There was just

four—oh, I got to look in the album—four or five, six of us. And they did a variety of things, you know, dancing. And then there was a man with his show dog that could dance the hula.

JR: A dog that danced the hula? (Chuckles)

NK: Yes, mm hmm. And then, who else did we have? I gotta look in the album.

JR: So there's like a regular routine that you have?

NK: Yes.

JR: And did you perform this at one place or did you go out?

NK: No, no. We went all over the place, wherever the USO wanted us to go. Whatever the outposts were, I don't remember. We did quite a few places that we did USO work, but I can't. . . .

JR: You were entertaining . . .

NK: Servicemen.

JR: Servicemen. And so you went to maybe some military bases.

NK: Yes, yes that's right.

JR: Things like that. Was there a USO office where you met or anything like that?

NK: No, no, no. We just went when they called us. The leader of our group (Leolani Blaisdell) probably had a schedule, I don't know.

JR: How was that?

NK: That was fun. We enjoyed it. They'd pick us up in a command car, and they'd bring us home. They would transport us to and from.

JR: That would be in the evening?

NK: In the evenings. And it was blackout then, you know, so command car, and we whizzed right through.

JR: You were big shots.

(Laughter)

NK: Yeah.

JR: Were they appreciative?

NK: Oh very, just to see girls. We were young then, we weren't old. (Laughs) So we had dates. We had a few dates.

JR: So there was some socializing?

NK: Oh yes. Oh sure.

JR: One of the things I read was that there were ten or twenty times as many men as there were women.

NK: Yes. So we had the pick of the lot. (Laughs) Oh, we didn't go with the servicemen. No, we were with the officers. Well, that's where we entertained most.

JR: Why was that?

NK: Well, they took care of us. We entertained the servicemen, but after that we'd go to the officer's quarters or. . . .

JR: They'd have like a little reception or something?

NK: Yeah.

JR: So there would be a big hall where all the . . .

NK: No, sometimes it would be right outside.

JR: Oh, like an outdoor kind of thing?

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. Wherever they're stationed. Out in the boondocks, that's where we performed. It didn't have to be in a club.

JR: It'd just be a crowd, sort of.

NK: Right.

JR: And then, after that?

NK: Well, that one you don't. But in the one that you entertain at the club, well, you entertain most of the servicemen and then after that the officers. 'Cause the officers come pick you up anyway. The driver might be an enlisted man, but the officer pick us up.

JR: Was that a volunteer thing or was that a job you were getting paid to do?

NK: We got paid. Oh yes.

JR: Do you remember how much you got paid?

NK: No. (Chuckles)

JR: Sounds like there were a lot of fringe benefits.

NK: (Laughs) I can't remember. Oh God.

JR: Well, it sounds like you enjoyed it though.

NK: Oh yes. I thought I would be an entertainer my whole life. But I went to school to be a secretary, and during the war that's what prompted me to go to work. And then, of course, when I got divorced. . . .

JR: Maybe we could get into the Hawaiian Air period.

NK: Nineteen forty-three.

JR: Had you ever been on an airplane before that?

NK: No.

JR: How did you find out about that?

NK: This Louise Akeo, who was leader of the Royal Hawaiian Girls' [Glee Club], where I worked. I flew for Hawaiian, and they knew I could do secretarial work so I went Downtown and worked in the freight office. And then from there I went to Honolulu Paper [Company]. And there were just four of us hostesses then.

JR: Airline hostesses.

NK: Yes.

JR: From what you said, there were men who did this before.

NK: Stewards. They were called stewards.

JR: But because of the war, I guess, they had to . . .

NK: Go to war or whatever. And then the windows were all opaque so nobody could see out, 'cause was during the war.

JR: They didn't want people to see out?

NK: No.

JR: They might be spies or something like that?

NK: That's right. And it took over an hour to get to Hilo.

JR: Would you remember the kind of plane they would fly?

- NK: It was one of the early DC planes. And I forgot how many passengers they carried. I can't remember. It wasn't too many. 'Cause there were usually only—I think on the Hilo flight had two girls, but most of the time there's only one girl.
- JR: Whereabouts did they fly at that time, do you remember?
- NK: Oh, to the different islands.
- JR: So went to Maui . . .
- NK: Hawai'i, Maui, Moloka'i. You'd work four days or five days and then you'd get three, four days off.
- JR: Was that a long day?
- NK: Mm hmm [yes]. You'd go and you'd come around, and then you turn around and you'd go. It was an all-day thing.
- JR: Was it like today, where they give you a little soda or something like that?
- NK: Mm mm, no.
- JR: What did they do?
- NK: Nothing, 'cause they couldn't see out and I don't think they—we never gave them anything.
- JR: So what was your job?
- NK: Well, to see that everybody was comfortable. You could tell when—you know, people at that time didn't ride planes. They mostly rode boats. And you'd go up and down the aisle, and you see somebody turning green, and you says, "Oh, here," and you give them the thing.
- JR: Oh, the bag? (Chuckles)
- NK: "Oh no, I'm fine," swallowing, "I'm fine." The minute you turned your back. . . .
- JR: Oh, really? A mess.
- NK: Uh huh [yes]. So you had to go and clean it. And then everybody else got sick.
- JR: 'Cause they saw that other person get sick?
- NK: No, they can smell it, you see. Oh, I used to get so aggravated. I knew they would—you can tell when they going to get sick. "Oh no, I'm fine, I'm fine," and they so proud they don't want to let you know that they about to upchuck.
- JR: Did you get sick on the flights at first?

NK: No.

JR: You're just a natural.

NK: (Laughs) Sometimes I'd go and I would be, oh, (out of sorts from the night before). But it's okay. I got on there. 'Cause USO, and then you had to go fly. But was fun.

JR: Sounds like there was only like four of you. Was it a glamorous job at that time?

NK: Oh yes. It was very glamorous. 'Cause we had uniforms, too, you see.

JR: So you were dancing, you were . . .

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: And flying. You were something!

(Laughter)

NK: Well, like I said, we were young then. (Chuckles) You could do anything.

JR: And then you left the airline and went to the ordnance, yeah?

NK: Department of Ordnance.

JR: Was that the order?

NK: Mm hmm, right. And then after ordnance, I went to work for Honolulu Paper Company, and from the paper company I went to Durante-Irvine Company.

JR: What was the ordnance? What was their job, do you remember?

NK: Mostly ammunition, armament. I forgot what department I was in. I think I was in the armament division, I forgot. They had different divisions in the Department of Ordnance.

JR: Did they have an office?

NK: Oh yes.

JR: Where was that?

NK: At the Schuman Carriage building . . .

JR: Oh, that's right.

NK: And then they moved to Fort Shafter.

JR: Were you working when they moved out to Fort Shafter? How did you get to work?

NK: Catch the bus.

JR: Must have took a while.

NK: Yes. But you do if you have to get to work. You had to work or else. (Pause) Couldn't afford a car, just caught the bus. Even Hawaiian Airlines, caught the bus.

JR: Was that out at the airport?

NK: Mm hmm [yes].

JR: So you don't recall exactly what you were doing for—you were doing clerical, secretarial work for ordnance.

NK: Yeah. They didn't call them secretaries then, they called them clerk stenographers. So you did clerking and you did stenographic work.

JR: Did you need any kind of security clearance or anything like that?

NK: Oh yeah, we had a badge to get into—not Downtown, but when we moved to Fort Shafter.

JR: Was it civilians working there or were you working for . . .

NK: Civilians.

JR: . . . a military . . .

NK: Military colonel. I worked for a military colonel.

JR: How was that?

NK: That was nice.

JR: Was it the people were nice or the . . .

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. Of course, they change every two years, so you get a new boss. But luckily I---no, I had two bosses. One went, and then I had this second boss, and then I went to Honolulu Paper [Company].

JR: Then the war came to an end. Can you remember what you were doing when you heard that the war was over.

NK: Nineteen forty-five. I was up at the ordnance. I was still with ordnance. Oh, we whooped it up! (Chuckles) Oh yes. But I was sorry to leave, because I really enjoyed working. But civil service wasn't my bag, because I didn't think I would even pass the test, you know. I don't think---I took several tests later, I guess. Not for civil service, someplace else. Where did I go? Oh, Castle & Cooke I guess. But no, I didn't think I would pass, so I just went to Honolulu Paper [Company].

JR: So you whooped it up.

NK: Whooped it up!

JR: Was there ever a sense that, on your part at least, that Hawai'i would have been invaded or anything like that?

NK: No, I never thought that. I thought that the U.S. did a good job.

JR: You felt pretty secure throughout.

NK: Yes, yes. Like doing USO work, you can see all of these servicemen all over the place. You know that it would be hard for them to try. And of course, all of the fighting took place on Midway, Tarawa, and Philippines, not so much here. But the supplies came from here, I presume.

JR: Did you follow the progress of the war very much? Were you that up on what was happening?

NK: No, not too much, except what I read on the paper.

JR: Was it the kind of thing people would sit around and talk about?

NK: No, no. 'Cause I think they were afraid that you might be misinterpreted. And then they'd say you said this, and you didn't say it. They didn't talk much about it. Even when we went out with the officers, we never did say anything or anything secret or anything like that. We never bothered to be nosy.

JR: Well, I guess they were enjoying themselves here in Hawai'i.

NK: Absolutely.

JR: Did you ever get to know one person fairly well and then they would go off?

NK: Oh yes, several. Several of them. And they were all officers, not servicemen. They were officers because that's all we mingled—got in contact with, with most of our shows, either at the officer's club or clubs. And yet most of them were all married. They were just homesick and they needed a feminine companion. So we went dancing and things like that.

JR: But it was pretty platonic though.

NK: Yes. Yes. 'Cause you know, I'm old-fashioned. When somebody's married, that's not my bag. (Chuckles) 'Cause I don't want somebody else to do it to me. I always feel for the wife—or the husband, whatever the circumstances might be. All they wanted was somebody to talk to, instead of men all day. Oh, they tried. They tried.

(Laughter)

JR: Did you have any girlfriends that became involved?

NK: Oh yeah, like Tootsie. She married [Colonel W. Frank] Steer.

JR: That's right.

NK: He was a provost marshal. And another gal that I worked with at ordnance married a colonel. Now, who else? I think that's about the only ones. The rest of us married locals.

JR: Was it considered a good move to . . .

NK: Marry into the service?

JR: Yeah.

NK: Well, I don't know. I never thought of it as a good move. I don't think I would want to live on the Mainland. I would like to visit, but not to live there. For one thing, you would have to have the clothes, because of the seasonal changes.

JR: Can't wear slippers every day.

NK: Or go barefooted either. (Chuckles)

JR: When you came to Honolulu, was that the first time?

NK: That's the first time I wore shoes. And do you know the first day I went to school I fell flat on my face?

JR: (Chuckles) Why was that?

NK: Because don't know how to walk with shoes. And they had cuban heels in that time. They were fat heels, not the spikes that they wear now. So there I was, proud of going to school, and wham! Books and all went down. (Laughs) But I learned real fast to wear shoes, how to walk with shoes.

JR: You had to leave all your friends back in . . .

NK: Down the valley. Yeah, had to make new ones. In fact, I still have a teacher that taught me, that I played golf with, but she doesn't play anymore.

JR: She was your teacher?

NK: Yes.

JR: She must be. . . .

NK: Yeah, she's about eighty-something I think, and she's still alive! So when she sees me she says, "This is my student."

(Laughter)

JR: When you were living here, did you get to go back? Like when you were going to junior high, did you go back to visit your folks?

NK: Yeah, right. I think in those days we went by boat or plane, I can't remember.

JR: Did you write letters?

NK: No, not to my dad or mother, because I don't think they would understand. I don't remember writing to my mother. She usually came here more often than going back there.

JR: I'm wondering if she knew what a glamorous life you were leading. (Chuckles)

NK: No, no, no, no. She knew I was dancing and things like that, but because I had gotten married that was *pau*, you know. It was fun. It was fun. You learned an awful lot.

JR: So you married again then once the . . .

NK: In '49.

JR: Forty-nine.

NK: And we've been married for forty-two years. He was married before, he's got a son.

JR: I remember talking to you . . .

NK: He was born and raised in Kamuela, where Parker Ranch is. His father worked for Parker Ranch.

JR: What's your husband's name?

NK: Samuel Parker Kaaua.

JR: And during the war, he worked at . . .

NK: At the navy, Pearl Harbor. He worked in the pipe fitter's shop. And then from there he went to work for Tidewater Oil Company. And from Tidewater Oil Company he went to Standard Oil Company—of course, which is Chevron now—and retired from Standard Oil.

JR: Does he talk about the war years?

NK: Oh yeah, yeah. He does, 'cause he was there when—oh now, let's see. Yeah, he was working at Pearl Harbor when it struck. Shrapnel flying all over the place and stuff.

JR: Then they must have been pretty busy.

NK: Yeah. 'Cause he got divorced in '41, see? And I don't know when he went to work for

Tidewater. I think he was with Tidewater when I met him. No, he was at (Pearl Harbor) when I met him.

JR: I'm just going stop.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-4-1-92; SIDE ONE

JR: So after the war, then you went to work . . .

NK: At Hopaco—Honolulu Paper [Company]—and then from there I went to Durante-Irvine Company. And then from Durante-Irvine Company, I went to Tax Foundation of Hawaii, where I retired from.

JR: You worked at Tax Foundation a long time.

NK: Mm hmm [yes]. About twenty-two or twenty-three years.

JR: Did you enjoy working there?

NK: Yes.

JR: And you were also doing clerical, secretarial.

NK: Secretarial. Well, when you work for private organization, they don't call you clerk stenographers, they call you secretary.

JR: I think I wanted to try and ask you—it seems like you've experienced such a change in Hawai'i. The period that you've been alive, there's been so much change. I mean, from Waipi'o Valley to . . .

NK: Honolulu.

JR: Yeah, you're living in Kāhala. What's it been like to live through all that?

NK: Well, you manage. What do you mean, "What is it like to. . . ." What, to live there and move, and move, and move, is that what you mean?

JR: What is it like looking back today at all the change that took place and the war and all that?

NK: Well, the biggest change is Waikīkī, of course. It was so nice then, but now it's a zoo out there.

JR: Do you ever go?

NK: No. I hardly ever go, unless I have to.

JR: You used to be there probably every day.

NK: Yeah.

JR: How does it make you feel?

NK: Well, I mean, I don't know. I just don't care for it. It's just like a concrete jungle out there.

JR: But is it progress or is it a shame?

NK: Well, it's progress. I mean, you have to, because real estate is so expensive and hard to come by. So you had to go up instead of. . . . You know, in those days, everything was down [i.e., low-rise]. So you can't hold progress back. You have to go forward, you can't go backwards.

JR: Tourism really took off, yeah?

NK: Yes. But then, I guess now the war has sort of suspended it a little bit, huh? They're not coming in droves like they were.

JR: You mean, the Gulf . . .

NK: Gulf War, yeah. But I guess they still have enough of them out there. Because for the Hawaiian Open you couldn't find a room in Waikīkī. 'Cause these kids from Hawai'i came, and they were just for the night. No rooms to be had. So must have been quite a few people out here. And of course, all the pros, etcetera and etcetera, and their wives and families, you know? There was no room to be had.

JR: You know, back when, say, the thirties and forties, did you feel safe going anywhere?

NK: Oh yes, yes. You didn't have to lock your door, and you don't mind walking late at night. Because we used to dance at night. And so no big deal. I'd walk home one time from out—where was I? Farmers Road. And I stayed on Nineteenth Avenue. I walked from Farmers Road to Nineteenth Avenue, wasn't scared at all.

JR: I guess what I was maybe trying to get at—and maybe I asked the question a little too broadly—was that, for me, it just seems like things were so different.

NK: It was different. It was different. And if something happened to you, somebody was always there to either say, "You all right?" or, "Do you need help?" Nowadays, they just step right over you. And yet they don't want to, 'cause you might sue them for moving you when you got a back dislocated or something. And you can't blame them either. But there is a vast difference of how people co-mingle, in other words. And of course, we are not the type that live up with the Joneses, we just do our own thing and that's it.

JR: Well, I've enjoyed talking to you.

NK: Oh, I hope so. (Laughs)

JR: You've led a very interesting life.

NK: Yes. Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

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Volume I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

April 1994